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Chair

Mr. Rick Norlock

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC)): I'll call the meeting to order.

Thank you very much for being here this morning. We have with us today

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Roussel, Professor, École nationale d'administration publique.

Mr. Roussel, you have 10 minutes for your opening statement.

[*English*]

Dr. Stéphane Roussel (Professor, École nationale d'administration publique, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for having invited me. I know several of you because I participated in the committee's work previously.

[*English*]

I'll make my remarks in French. If you would prefer to ask any questions or to debate in English afterwards, that's absolutely no problem. It's just easier for me to do this in French.

[*Translation*]

I participated in your work, in particular the proceedings having to do with NATO and Canada's participation in various alliances. Today in examining the issue of Canada's cooperation with the United States, you are broaching a topic I know very well, since my doctoral thesis was about Canada-U.S. relations in the area of defence. Moreover, by extension, one of the topics involved is security in the Arctic, which is another of my research topics. Most of the topics on the committee's agenda are also familiar to me.

I would like to remind you briefly of my understanding of Canada-U.S. relations. Basically, when discussions are held with the United States, the work of the Canadian government must consist in seeking two basic points of equilibrium. On the one hand, Canada's relations with the United States have to be balanced with Canada's relationship with the rest of the world. There can be contradictions, or links between the two. In addition, the Canadian government's central concern has to be to attempt to balance matters of security, prosperity and national identity.

Very often, those considerations are contradictory. If we put the emphasis on one of those considerations—for instance, we can emphasize security and defence—we risk causing problems or difficulties involving prosperity or identity. I could come back to that later.

On several occasions I have declared publicly that I am a “continentalist”. That means that my concept of foreign policy and Canadian defence is based on the idea that Canada has to line up as closely as possible with U.S. policies. Prosperity and security and even Canadian identity is dependent on a very cautious, but real, closeness with the United States. I label myself a “continentalist”.

However, I generally advocate for a mature “continentalism”, that is to say that Canada must manage its relations with the U.S. in a cautious way. What I mean by that is a continentalism within which Canadian identity considerations—i.e. Canada's own identity—must be preserved. That is an important element not only for Canada's very existence, but also for Canada's national unity, as well as public opinion and the public support the Canadian government must have.

My concept of continentalism, contrary to what certain governments have done over the past few years, is not one that anticipates the requests or expectations of the United States. Offering gifts to the American government in the hopes of obtaining something in return is generally a strategy that does not work in Canada-U.S. relationships.

Moreover, I firmly believe—I believe in liberalism as a political philosophy—in multilateral and bilateral institutions. Certain actions or positions taken by the government over the past few years may lead one to believe that some institutions are no longer held in high regard, as they were before. Certain institutions may be seen as cumbersome, ineffectual or costly, but they also come with a lot of extremely important advantages particularly as concerns Canada-U.S. relations in the area of defence. The institutions thus play a very important role because they allow for balance in the relationship between the two countries. They make the relationship more predictable, and they set anchor points that we can use as benchmarks to develop a long-term relationship.

Finally, I firmly believe that the common values and vision held by Canada and the United States constitute a cornerstone we can use to build a long-term relationship. All of that, if you will, forms the basis of my thoughts on the matter.

Regarding the current state of Canada-U.S. relations, I will first of all discuss the Arctic and issues relating to security that come up periodically.

As you know, there is necessary debate on the nature of the problems and challenges that will arise in the Arctic over the coming years. We do not know what they will be yet, because this belongs to the future, but whatever we may think, those challenges will be important and will absolutely require international cooperation. That cooperation may be multilateral, via institutions such as the Arctic Council or the United Nations, but it is crucial that Canada examine more attentively the possibility of developing relations with the United States in that region.

Some progress has been made over the past years. For instance, the agreement signed with the United States in December 2012, or the Canada-U.S. Framework for Arctic Cooperation, 2012, are steps in the right direction. However, I would like to suggest that we go a bit further, as I did publicly before the committee several times by suggesting that a joint Canada-U.S. advisory committee be created on matters of security in the north. This would be a type of permanent joint committee on northern defence which would resemble a parity committee. Its mandate would be to explore matters of security that are of concern to both countries and to make recommendations to both governments. The committee would not be a decision-making body, but it would have the power to make recommendations.

You also want to examine missile defence. That is one topic on the list I was sent, and I will close on that point.

In 2004 or 2005, that question raised a lot of interest among Canadians when the bases were laid for the current Canada-U.S. relations. I consider this situation uncomfortable and incomplete. This would probably be the right time to go back to the issue and allow Canada to take part directly and openly in missile defence. I have in fact spoken out in favour of that participation on several occasions.

The difference between 2004 and 2005 and today's situation is that the opposition to missile defence in Canada was due in large measure to the hostility a good number of Canadians felt toward the Bush administration. That was also due to feelings that remained about the very controversial war in Iraq.

That situation has dissipated today and most European states have come out in favour of missile defence. Canada has not given itself the opportunity to talk about it openly because it has stayed outside of the program. Perhaps the time has come now to look at that issue.

● (1110)

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, I think I have used my 10 minutes, so I'll stop.

Merci beaucoup.

The Chair: Just before we begin questions I will remind the committee that we have one witness today, and so we will have an extra 15 minutes with him. Then, after the witness, we have a substantial number of notices of motion and other business that we want to talk about, particularly our budget for the defence of North America study. This is just a reminder to you all.

We will begin questions with the government side.

Mr. Chisu.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, professor, for your presentation.

I will start first with general questions referring basically to how the changing of the international security environment affects Canada and North America from a defence and security perspective.

I am looking at the recent changes that we can observe in Ukraine and the flexing by Russia of its muscles, and various military scenarios. How do you see these affecting, or have they affected, relations between Canada and the United States?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Thank you very much for the question.

[*Translation*]

Curiously, I am tempted to say that the environment is coming full circle. A lot of observers, with a wry smile, say that we are back to the cold war or that the situation somewhat resembles the situation that existed during the cold war.

That element, that is to say the deterioration of relations with Russia, is relatively new. Another new element is the international tension among governments, particularly the tension between Russia and western governments. I understand that this is what you are alluding to.

That changes raise a certain number of issues. In particular it brings us back to a topic you studied a few years ago, i.e. Canada's position within NATO. For a few years now Canada has blown hot and cold about NATO. NATO does not have the same polish or grandeur that it had in the past. For instance, Canada's opposition to the development of a NATO strategy in the Arctic indicated that it was feeling a certain malaise about that institution.

In fact, what the resurgence of tensions means is that Canada is going to have to clarify its position in the North Atlantic organization, which is being done today. The announcement that Canada has sent troops to Poland, I believe, or to Romania, is going to force a discussion on that topic.

For you and for Canada-U.S. relations, this may mean also that you will have to carefully consider the relation between, on the one hand, the defence of North America, the defence of the Arctic in particular, and on the other hand, the defence of Europe, or the situation in Europe.

This may also mean re-examining where Canada wants to invest. Does Canada want to re-invest in the defence of North America, or invest in its intervention capability abroad? That tension between both aspects of Canada's defence policy is always going to be there.

● (1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: You were mentioning the Arctic; I have a particular interest in the Arctic. We have seen a reinforcement of the Russian interest in the Arctic with the refurbishing of bases in their part of the Arctic and the latest developments testing the airspace of various other countries in the Arctic.

What are the security threats that you envisage in the future, for Canada especially? How can we mitigate these threats?

How can we make common front with the United States? The United States is also part of the Arctic, in Alaska. How do you see us doing something positive in the Arctic?

Our government has a continuous interest in the Arctic, as has been shown by the Prime Minister's visits several times every year in the Arctic and also by certain measures that we took before the situation deteriorated in the present way with Russia, which is one of the main representatives in the Arctic.

I'm telling you this because I lived in the eastern bloc and I don't like this kind of evolution of the situation there, because we are going back, as you mentioned. I know that sometimes the intentions of Russia are long-term ones. We need somehow to defend against the kind of aggression being shown by Russia.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: There are different dimensions to the question you just asked. Thanks for asking it.

My view on this is that we must be very careful. We should not fuel the fire. One of my strong pieces of advice is to please try to compartmentalize. Do not mix what's happened now in Ukraine and Russia with what happened in the Arctic.

[*Translation*]

To the extent possible, we need to address the two issues separately.

We shouldn't use the situation in Ukraine as an excuse to take a harder line in the Arctic. I would say that probably the best way to proceed is to deal with the two issues separately.

Does Russia pose a medium-term or long-term threat in the Arctic? Possibly, and we need to take that possibility into consideration. But it's critical to ensure that neither Canada nor the U.S. is to blame for triggering a potential arms race or escalating tensions in the Arctic.

In recent years, Canada has often been depicted, by the Europeans in particular, as the most aggressive state in the Arctic, the one with the strongest and firmest stance. And that attitude could trigger other behaviours, especially on Russia's part. It could use Canada's aggressive position to justify its own.

Canada's and Russia's respective identities are deeply intertwined with the Arctic. And that is not nearly as true for the other Arctic states. To be Canadian is to love the Arctic, and Canadians have a deep attachment to the Arctic. News of tensions or problems in the region always meets with strong reactions from Canadians coast to coast to coast, whether they live in Vancouver or Newfoundland, regardless of their language or preferences. The vast majority of Canadians care about what is happening in the Arctic, and that must be taken into consideration. That's also the case in Russia.

[*English*]

The Chair: I would ask you to continue that thought, perhaps, later on.

Mr. Harris, for seven minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, sir, for joining us today. We're pleased to have you here to present your views.

I'm interested in your notion of cautious continentalism, which is the catchphrase that struck me. We do cooperate, of course. It's important for us to cooperate on an international level with the United States. We have the larger land mass. We have the largest country in the world and the longest coastline.

How do we maintain the level of cooperation that we need with this superpower, with all of its assets and probably military planning well ahead of what we've even conceived, and at the same time maintain our independence in that relationship and not be overwhelmed? Is there any formula for that? Are there any words of advice you would offer? Obviously, you've thought about this, which is why you are cautious. Could you give us a little bit more in terms of a framework?

● (1120)

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Sure. There are two arguments I can raise here. The first one is historical.

If you look at the history of Canada-U.S. relations, that imbalance between the powers of the two countries has existed since the end of the nineteenth century. Canada is still there and still independent. It still has it's own politics and is still different from the U.S. From the historical point of view, we should balance or mitigate that fear of the U.S. The risk to Canadian sovereignty from being close with the U.S. is less important than people usually think.

Second, what is the solution for this? In my view the solution, and again I'm looking at the history of Canada-U.S. relations, is institutions. The more we make clear to the Americans what we want and don't want and the rules between them and us, the better it is. Usually, the record of Canada-U.S. relations within the institutions is quite well.

Sometimes my American colleagues are frustrated, because they are looking at the dynamics of Canada-U.S. relations and saying, "You Canadians are winning much more of the game in the negotiations than we are", which indicates that institutions are protecting Canadian sovereignty or Canadian freedom.

Mr. Jack Harris: How do we achieve that balance?

One question is, where do you draw the line? What you're saying is that there should be a line, that it's important that there be a line, so people know what the rules are.

We could have a situation, and DND might be one example, where one country is perhaps more concerned or more fearful or more willing to put resources into something that's a very slim risk. We may be drawn into it because they think it's a good idea and because they are our partner we have to go along. Do we see that? Are there any elements of cooperation that have that aspect to them?

North Korea, for example, is the alleged threat requiring missile defence—not the Russians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: Generally speaking, Canada-U.S. relations rely on the premise that we, in Canada, recognize the Americans' strategic priorities. One of the fundamental elements of Canada-U.S. relations is that Washington determines what constitutes a threat, not Ottawa. Usually, we have to adapt to how Washington defines the threat.

Where Canada has some flexibility is in how it confronts that threat. Canada has always exercised that flexibility. We can't prevent the U.S. from taking action to defend North America, but we can negotiate the terms and conditions of our role in that defence.

As long as Canadians assert their desire to contribute to North America's security, they will have the Americans' respect. The Americans aren't really inclined to infringe on Canada's sovereignty as long as Canada asserts its responsibilities.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Can I ask a question about sovereignty in the large space that we have, including air space, well out into the North Atlantic and the Arctic? Does the nature of Canada's geography and what we might have to do in the sense of sovereignty patrols and our ability to intercept, etc., have any influence on the strategic choice that Canada might make in choosing, for example, a successor to the F-18 fighter jet? What type, what capabilities, and what functions would be the priorities for Canada as opposed to some other country in choosing a jet? Do you have any views on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: Yes, absolutely. Canada's geographic reality should indeed influence our choices. The significance of the geographical aspects you mentioned, including the size of our territory and the tremendous distance it spans, hinges on the answer to this question: what is our priority? Defending Canadian territory, which would seem to make sense, or participating in overseas missions? In the case of the F-35 jets, it would seem that Canada's participation in foreign missions trumps considerations around defending our territory.

Before geographical considerations can factor into decisions as technical as the acquisition of a successor to the F-18s, we must decide what we want to focus on. Is our main focus protecting Canada's territory, yes or no? And that question has yet to be answered.

● (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have 40 seconds.

Mr. Jack Harris: I asked this question before and I have three documents in front of me: the “United States Coast Guard: Arctic Strategy”; “National Strategy for the Arctic Region” from the President of the United States; and the “Implementation Plan for The National Strategy for the Arctic Region”.

I don't think there are more than two or three words there that mention Canada. They seem to be going it alone with their Arctic strategy. Does that tell us anything about what we should be doing with our own priorities and whether we should be making it—

The Chair: You will have to wait until the next round before you answer that question.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: I'll note that one. It's very interesting.

Mr. Jack Harris: I got the question on the table anyway.

The Chair: Mr. Williamson, please.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

In fact, my question might allow you to answer it. Is it your view that institutions protect in advance the interests, particularly, of smaller countries, such as Canada, and that we can move our priorities to those institutions, particularly with the U.S., whether within NATO, NORAD, or a free trade agreement with the United States?

Perhaps through that question, you can also respond. How would these institutions bring American priorities into line with what Canadians would like in the north? You could do that perhaps by also referencing some of the documents Mr. Harris just referred to as well? I'd like to hear more of your thoughts on institutions and our using those to advance our interests with the Americans.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: I have a couple of points on this.

First, about the U.S. strategies regarding the north, and the different documents mentioned, the first thing that strikes me about the Americans regarding the Arctic is that they are absent. It's very difficult to find somebody in Washington who'll pay attention to the Arctic. Usually, it's the representatives from Alaska who bring the issue to the table and make noise to attract their colleagues' attention. So these documents represent, I think, a marginal view, in a certain way. It's hard to say that the president is really paying attention to what's happening in the north. That is the first element of my response.

Secondly, Canadians, as far as I know, haven't tried very much to bring the Americans into their game. For example, one of the missing opportunities we had over the last two years was to create a North American chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Canada is now chairing the Arctic Council. Have you hear about this? There are a few things coming out in regard to it, but one, among many things, I think we've missed on this one is to talk with the Americans, because the Americans will be the next chair of the Arctic Council. We need to try to do the same thing that the Scandinavians did in coordinating their chairmanship as a Scandinavian one for over six years, or perhaps it was only two years.

With the Americans we could have done the same, by saying, “Okay, let's try to figure out what could be a North American approach to the north within that.” I spoke to people in Washington, and they told me, “No, we didn't hear anything from Ottawa.” So the fact that Canada is not mentioned in that document is not really surprising, since Canada is not engaging the Americans on this. We should be more proactive, I think, on this issue.

That brings me to the idea that I put on the table before, that maybe we can engage in a discussion with the Americans on creating a binational committee to debate Arctic issues.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

You had mentioned—and I'm curious to get your thoughts on this—that there's little benefit in offering gifts, *des cadeaux aux États-Unis*, but I wasn't really sure in what context you were saying that. Can you give any examples of what you meant by that?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Usually the strategy of the continentalists is to say that to be relevant at the world level, we should be relevant in Washington. How can we be relevant in Washington? It's by giving the Americans what they want. That strategy was used by countries such as Australia, for example, to say, okay, we should prove to the Americans that we are a super ally, that we are behind them, that we're supporting them. In a certain way that strategy was used by the early Martin government in 2004-05, saying that we should really show the Americans that we support them, and we can then move on other issues, the deepening of North American integration, trade issues, and so on. But it never worked as we can't expect the Americans to pay attentions to what Ottawa is doing by building an American strategy in Ottawa, except when they ask for it. The risk for Canada is giving the Americans things that they don't need. The Australians did that. They changed some of their regulations, tried to show how strong they were in the anti-terrorist war. No one has paid attention to that in Washington, so they didn't receive the benefits of such an attitude.

● (1130)

Mr. John Williamson: I would agree with you on that as well.

Do I have a few more minutes?

The Chair: Yes, you do.

Mr. John Williamson: What are your thoughts about an institution that currently exists, NORAD, and moving it from air surveillance to maritime surveillance? Is that something we should explore, do you think? Is that an institution that we ought to build upon, or do you think it should be something else?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: The committee went to Colorado Springs, so you have an idea of how looks now. There's a debate. Some people say, okay, the good old days of NORAD are over. It's finished, so we should we move along and find something else. I disagree with that. The problem is that there is still a need to assess what NORAD can do on the maritime side. It's not clear yet. Even after 10 years of giving a maritime mandate to NORAD, it's still not clear. NORAD cannot act, but can only monitor things. They don't have any control over the navy. They cannot act when they see something. The balance sheet is not clear yet. But some other people are saying, okay, we should go ahead, we should move along on this—and again, talking of the Arctic, we should give NORAD an Arctic mandate.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: NORAD, to me, is something that we should save if only for political reasons, because it's the centrepiece in people's minds of Canada-U.S.—

Mr. John Williamson: I'm not clear on your opinion. Do you think it should fall under NORAD or is NORAD strictly the air—

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: No. If we can expand it, we should try. It's worth it to try. That is my position.

Mr. John Williamson: Okay. Finally, what is your view of NATO's involvement in the Arctic, if any, or it better to keep the Arctic under continental purview? That seems to be your preference, but I thought I'd ask.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Yes, it is clearly my preference, but it's hard to keep NATO out of the Arctic. The Norwegians, especially, are pushing for this. But if we can, if we want to limit the role of NATO in the Arctic, as the government seems to want, we must give more room to bilateral cooperation. I mean, we should do one of these things—

The Chair: Okay. Ms. Murray for seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you for being here.

I'm going to pick up on the conversation around the *cadeaux* strategy, or not. You're saying, don't give the present but respond to the request. As an example, would that mean you would have counselled the government to join the war in Iraq at the request of the United States?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: The war in Iraq was a very special case, because there were a lot of strategic interests of Canada at stake. In that case, if I go back to 2003, I was one of those who were saying that when serious business happens, we don't have a choice, we will go. It was a surprise for all of us academics, and we're still trying to understand what happened then.

Retrospectively, I can say that when some crucial interests were at stake at the time, the problem for Canada being that its main allies were divided, with the French and Germans on one side and the Americans and the British on the other, that was probably good reason for us to try to stay away.

Ms. Joyce Murray: So it's on a case-by-case basis. You don't necessarily accede to American demands in—

● (1135)

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Iraq proved that we can say no without serious consequences.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Okay, that's good.

When you were asked about the CF-18's replacement, your response was to ask what Canada's priority is. Is it the defence security of Canada and the continent, or is it overseas operations? That raises the question of the defence strategy that we have right now, with some criticizing it as basically a laundry list of equipment that we haven't been able to purchase. So there is a planned re-set of that strategy. What's your view of it? We've had the de Kerckhove and Petrolekas strategic outlook for Canada, in which they have been calling for a fuller strategy that includes defence, trade, foreign policy and so on, one would address that kind of question of what our priorities are.

Do you view that as the right way to go, with a more comprehensive role of government—

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: A grand strategy.

Ms. Joyce Murray: —or do you think we should have a defence strategy without trying to wrap it in with all of those other strategies?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: My first reaction is that probably the grand strategy is the better. The broader your view is, the better it is. The problem that we have is that historically it's very difficult to do it. The example we have is the Martin government's approach to Canada's international politics in 2005, which was an attempt to have a very broad view of Canadian international relations.

It's very difficult to make such a strategy, it because you have to reconcile a lot of different interests and different views in it. For sure, in the ideal world this is what we should aim at, but it is very difficult.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Sometimes you have to make a decision as to whether something is ideal but impractical, or whether it is practical but less than ideal. Where would you sit on that?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: In the practical world, we should have different white papers. Foreign affairs white papers could be independent, to give us an idea of how the government is viewing the world, what the fundamentals are in international relations. I say this because there are different philosophies and approaches to it. As long as we don't know exactly what the fundamentals are—who is the threat, what are the threats, what is the most important challenge that the governments thinks will happen in the coming years—as long as we don't have that data, there's nothing we can do. So we need to at least have some reasonable mid-term assessment of the priorities for Canada, in both defence and foreign affairs.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Are we in a position to make a commitment to a potentially $20 billion to $40 billion fighter jet replacement program in the absence of a strategy and clarity as to what the priorities are?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: A good white paper on defence could be enough, as long as you're saying our priority in defence is defending the Arctic, defending Canadian territory, contributing to an international coalition, whatever. But you have to name it because your strategic choice will have a strong impact on the acquisition.

Ms. Joyce Murray: So we need a white paper first and then we can determine the capabilities we need and can go and seek the best possible procurement.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Yes, we need goals, we need strategy, and then we can decide.

Ms. Joyce Murray: The Prime Minister claimed that our commitment to F-35 was a contractual one, and then it was acknowledged that there was no contract. That really put the cart before the horse. That's what I'm hearing you say.

I also wanted to pick up on the question about maritime capacity. We've had someone come before our committee whose view was that the primary priority with respect to the defence of Canada and North America—and we talked about the Arctic—was the weak maritime capacity that we have right now. She also made the case that the biggest concern is not a military threat to our sovereignty, but things like climate change and activities in the Arctic that might affect sovereignty issues, not on a military level but on the level of climate change, pollution, and so on.

Can you comment on the priority of maritime capacity, and secondly, do you agree with the people who have come to the committee and said that military threat is not the big issue, that there are other kinds of issues with respect to the Arctic.

● (1140)

The Chair: You can make a 45-second response.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Okay. My view on this is that the higher the level of activities you have in the Arctic, for example the more human presence you have there, the more you need a governmental presence.

It's not necessarily the military threat that is the real issue. There could be an oil spill or an environmental accident. It could be criminality. It could be illegal trafficking, but all these potential threats underline the need for the government to be present, clearly, in the Arctic. You could say the same for the maritime security in general, and yes, I agree that a military threat is not the first, unless we have dramatic change in our relationship with Russia. I don't want to fuel the fire.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Gallant, for five minutes....

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to mention that our previous party, one of our historic parties that came together with the Conservatives, the Reform party, when they were in opposition, started asking when the Liberal government of the day was going to start preparing and issue a white paper. I think that was as early as 1997.

So it's interesting that once we formed government, we did come out with the Canada first defence strategy, which is our white paper and an ongoing evolution. I know that the member is fairly new to this committee, but it was under the Liberal government that we started in the joint strike fighter program. So they initiated the process of Canada being a part of the whole F-35 research effort and what came afterwards.

Our witness mentioned the Arctic Council rotation. What I'm curious to know is how the eventual chairmanship of Russia may impact the defence of North America.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: First, the Arctic Council doesn't have anything to say about security and defence, except for things like search and rescue. But the country that is chairing the Arctic Council could at least give a sort of list of priorities of what kinds of activities should be developed, especially when dealing with environmental, social, and economic development issues. This doesn't have an impact directly on defence and security, but at least it would give you diplomatic leverage to attract attention to this or to lower the attention paid to it. That's what the Canadian government seems to be doing right now.

So there's no direct relation with defence in the Arctic Council.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We mentioned NORAD and also NATO earlier in the discussions. Would you see a benefit to expanding NORAD to include NATO's European partners so that there's a coordinated, seamless, mutual situational awareness extending across the NATO region?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: The answer is no. NORAD must remain North American. I don't think the Europeans would want to do this. Both Canadians and Americans don't necessarily want the Europeans to come and look at what happened in North America in managing North American defence.

There are some allies—for example, I know of British officers who are working with NORAD—but this is at quite a low level. We don't want to expand it to a higher level in that kind of forum. We can create other kinds of forums, but not in that kind of institution.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What about extending NORAD's reach through cyberspace in addition to airspace and maritime? Would that be advantageous to the security of North America?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: In cyberspace I don't think so. We can create something different, but I doubt this is the same kind of approach. I mean it's not the same physical approach to the issue. So we can take inspiration from NORAD and create something parallel, but not by using NORAD itself.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: With the recent actions taken by Russia in western Europe, specifically to what degree is there an increase in the threat level, if any, for our Arctic sovereignty?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: As far as we can see now, it's not creating a clear new threat for Canadian sovereignty in the north. My concern about this is when Canada will actually make its claim regarding the continental shelf, which is when there will be risk of conflict between the Russian and Canadian views.

What could happen now in eastern Ukraine and Europe could have an effect on this, just by putting a bitter tone to the discussions regarding the North Pole, for example, because the two countries both want to have the North Pole. It's funny but it seems to be going in that direction. So the impact it could have is that Russia and Canada could have a bitter tone to their relationship and be less likely to compromise on this issue. So it could have an impact on this, yes, but not directly on Canadian sovereignty—not now.

● (1145)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our next questioner will be Madam Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you kindly, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Roussel, let me start by thanking you for a most informative presentation. I'm delighted to welcome a fellow colleague from the École nationale d'administration publique.

I want to give you an opportunity to follow up on what you were saying about Canada's tone and attitude when it comes to the Arctic. In fact, you mentioned during your presentation that military threats aren't an immediate threat or, at least, aren't something we should be overly concerned about right now. Previous witnesses have expressed similar views to the committee.

In fact, Mr. de Kerckhove, of the CDA Institute, told us that the Arctic is one place where stakeholders have no choice but to cooperate, on search and rescue missions, in particular.

What I gather from your comments is that Canada's aggressive position on the Arctic could hurt that cooperation going forward. Is that a fair assessment of what you said?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: Yes, that's fair. I would just qualify those comments by adding that Canada's tone has changed over the past few years. The tone taken from 2006 to 2010 or 2011 has softened considerably. For instance, the whole "use it or lose it" rhetoric has disappeared.

The members of Canada's military have played a pivotal role in that regard. They made it clear that their main task, their primary mission, focused much more on helping the various departments carry out their Arctic activities than on driving out submarines or conducting potential military exercises in the region.

And so the tone has softened in recent years. But I worry that Canada's reputation of being aggressive will stick for some time still.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: I also gather from your comments that that aggressiveness could be used by other countries to justify a tougher stance or other types of behaviour in the Arctic that could ultimately hurt our sovereignty. And what you're recommending here is that we take a prudent approach, drawing a clear distinction between the issues, the conflicts involving the international community on one hand and the Arctic on the other.

Is that indeed what you were saying?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: Precisely. My advice is to compartmentalize the issues while exercising extreme caution so as not to be the one responsible for causing tensions.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you.

On a related note, the possibility of establishing an armed coast guard in Canada has been raised a few times in the course of the committee's discussions, similar to that of the U.S.

What is your view on that?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: I don't see much benefit in Canada arming its coast guard other than to bring our procedures in line with the U.S. Coast Guard's. The differences, however, are too great.

In the U.S., the coast guard is part of the Department of Defense, but in Canada, it falls under the Department of Transport. And those are two very different organizations. I don't think the major changes that would have to be made justify the potential benefits.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Could you give us a tangible example of a major change Canada would need to make to bring an armed Canadian Coast Guard in line with that of the U.S.?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: The legislation would likely need to be amended to allow the Canadian Coast Guard to carry out its activities in an armed capacity. And that would mean changing their status and making coast guards peace officers. At this point, I would prefer to see Canada's coast guard provide platforms to other agencies already vested with that authority, such as the RCMP, as Canada's navy does.

● (1150)

Ms. Élaine Michaud: How much time do I have remaining, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: One minute.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Mr. Roussel, could you elaborate a bit on the incursion risks that other countries pose as far as our air space is concerned, especially up north? We've already talked about Russia, but are other states likely to pose a threat in that regard?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: As far as I know, no other threats exist. Even Russia didn't appear to be a real threat, until just recently. None of the other states constitute a threat either. I don't think any other state has the physical means to threaten Canada's Arctic air space.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Leung.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

We talk about our Arctic, and we talk about our defence parameters on the Atlantic side. What I'd like to hear from you are your comments about how Canada should also address our third frontier in the north Pacific. I'd like to hear how we should address our role with some of our biggest trading partners, such as China, Japan, and South Korea. At least South Korea and Japan are aligned with the United States. China is not, and China also has ambitions in the Arctic.

Given all of that, should we focus some of our defence investment on the entryway to our Arctic Ocean through the north Pacific?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: This is really interesting because the Pacific side of Canada is probably where we have one of our biggest intellectual gaps, in the sense that we rarely pay attention to it. It's rare that you will find in defence documents or white papers a real concern about this. Considering what you said, and I fully agree with you, Canadian interests in the Pacific are growing. Sooner or later, but I think it's going to be sooner, we have to pay attention and have to develop a strategy regarding it. For now, the Arctic receives much more attention than the Pacific, but in the current situation, the Pacific is more important for Canada.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: I think I have to agree with that, too, but then we also have this attempt to open up the Pacific gateway. We're going to be putting up fairly large port facilities in Prince Rupert right down the Vancouver coast. Our shipping lanes in the north Pacific and our air lanes are much more travelled. With the United States, they have blue water capability for defence from aircraft carriers. Should we also not have the investments in the north Pacific for similar types of investments, whether it's blue water navy or a land based defence?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: On this, my view is that it's too expensive. We don't have the resources to do it, unfortunately.

What we should first try to do is probably to develop more robust diplomatic networks and try to develop partnerships with other countries in the Pacific, other than the U.S., to see exactly which countries we can eventually rely on to develop some partnerships. Diplomacy comes first in this case, because we don't have the resources.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Now if we do that, do we then do that in alignment with U.S. policy, or should this be via independent Canadian treaties—mutual co-operation ones, etc.—with South Korea, Japan, China, and so on?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Again, we should probably be aligned with the U.S. on this because we're starting almost from scratch. So aligning with the U.S. is certainly the best strategy for Canada.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: What is already in place for north Pacific security?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: There is almost nothing.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: There is nothing.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: We need to build from scratch. There were some attempts in the nineties, but there is almost nothing. Everything remains to be built from a Canadian strategy point of view.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: The reason I mention it is that when we look at all of the potential flash points around the world, they are the Middle East, Russia, North Korea, and very often we do not know on which side China is going to lie with respect to North Korea.

What is your opinion on how we should address this issue with defence in the way we dance with the Chinese on this?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: As in the Middle East, Canada has very little leverage in this region. Again, supporting the U.S. is probably still the best strategy for Canada.

There is no equivalent, for example, of a country like Israel that we can support, as the Canadian government is doing right now. If you compare it with other regions of the world, the same strategy cannot be applied there. Again, that's why I'm recommending sticking with the Americans on this.

● (1155)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Larose, you have five minutes.

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Roussel. Thank you for joining us today. Your remarks have been extremely insightful thus far.

Is there another country whose economic situation, extensive military capability and climate are comparable to Canada's and who is well positioned to defend its territory, a country that isn't in the shadow of another nation? Norway perhaps; it has a very effective army and a clear strategic policy.

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: People often look for countries whose situations are comparable to Canada's and it's very tough. The country most often compared to Canada is Australia.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Is there a comparable Nordic country?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: If you're talking about Nordic countries, it would be Norway, but there are major differences between Norway and Canada. Norway is much smaller than Canada, both in terms of its geography and population. Norway is extremely good at taking advantage of its position. It has a gateway to the European Union, without being a member, and it's part of NATO. Norway is a country that plays the role of mediator or link between countries.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: But it does retain a certain degree of independence.

You talked earlier about the implementation of the Arctic strategy and the difference in our approach to recognizing threats and that of the U.S. They are two completely different realities, with some similarities. Could you identify what they are as well as the differences?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: Do you mean in terms of the Arctic?

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Yes.

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: As I was saying earlier, Canadians are usually the ones who identify more threats in that regard than the Americans do.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Could you list the threats for us?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: The typical list contains threats to Canada's sovereignty. In my view, that isn't a real threat in that only a very small portion of Canada's territory is vulnerable.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: So there's no way to identify the threats specifically, but we can speculate.

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: It's speculation because we're dealing with the future. We're talking about scenarios.

In 2014, the problems we're confronted by are plane crashes, like the one in Resolute, ships in distress or perhaps remote communities facing social crises, climate-related challenges, environmental issues, serious accidents or disasters. Those are still the immediate threats we're confronted by in 2014.

If you were to ask what I think the Canadian government should be focused on today, I would say making sure an aircraft can take off from Trenton to provide help to a northern community, whether in Resolute or some other remote community.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Given the resources at our disposal, isn't diplomacy in fact the best tool we have in the long range?

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: The threats I mentioned are domestic ones. Even if we did have some agreement in place—which would only be with the Americans—to deal with certain local crises, diplomacy wouldn't be a consideration. It would be a matter of providing government services to the population. That's what would be called for.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: So it underlies the principles tied to our sovereignty, in other words, how we defend it and what the various dimensions involved are, whether military, environmental or civilian, as in the case of a crisis.

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: To my mind, Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic isn't in jeopardy. That's more of a perception that is largely attributed to the fact that Canadians have an attachment to the Arctic and sometimes worry about someone taking a portion of Canada's territory. That isn't the reality, however. There's no real threat to Canada's sovereignty.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: Strategically speaking in the long term, isn't it problematic to create a strong dependence as regards the Americans? That speaks to my point earlier. You mentioned Australia and Norway. This is something that could happen in the long run because Canada has unparalleled resources. Isn't it in every country's best interests to create a dependence? During major crises in the past, the royalties were massive. That happened in Europe, with the Second World War. Our resources are significant. That aspect of the relationship has never been tested. Just how mindful should we be in terms of our relationship with the U.S.? To what extent should we favour our sovereignty over their vision of the world?

● (1200)

Mr. Stéphane Roussel: I'm not worried about that because, historically, Canada-U.S. relations have been compartmentalized. Defence-related issues only affect defence. The Americans' presence on Canadian soil during the Second World War and the excellent level of cooperation in that regard didn't necessarily mean Canada's resources were in jeopardy. The different spheres of activity have always operated in silos. Historically, those kinds of activities in the security realm have not led to losses like the ones you are referring to. Canadians must do their part, to be sure. However, I'm not concerned about the consequences of a closer working relationship with the Americans, provided it follows well-defined parameters and explicitly drawn up rules.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

You have five minutes, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Chair. With your indulgence, I'd like to give my time to Mr. Carmichael, and I'll ask my questions in the third round.

The Chair: Mr. Carmichael.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

And thank you to our witness.

I hear you on Canada-U.S. relations, and clearly there are budget issues, particularly in the U.S. that are impacting Canada-U.S. relations in terms of military presence in the north. I understand your position or your point on there being very little in terms of an agreement at this point in time, so I'm fine with that in terms of understanding.

NORAD recently completed a two-week rapid response operation. I wonder if you could just talk briefly about the level of cooperation that already exists between Canada and the U.S. and how we can better enhance it. Is that level of cooperation on northern defence significant?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: The level of cooperation on the ground between Canadian and American military could be labelled as satisfactory, I think, for now, considering the resources the two countries are contributing to the north. The military on both sides are working very well together. It's not surprising because Canadians and Americans have been working together for decades now.

What is missing, in my view, is that we have to put it at a little bit of a higher level, not only at the tactical and operational level, but also more in terms of strategy and doctrine development. That's why I think we need to strengthen the discussion on other issues, more than simply on how we're working together on the ground. Having a common view on what the threats are, how we can face them, and what the challenges will be in five to ten years from now, is what is missing, from my perspective. It's not the cooperation between the military offices, but that we should develop more of an intergovernmental approach on this.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you.

I'd like to also have a quick look at the Arctic. In your testimony today, you talked a bit about Canada being the most aggressive in the Arctic. I'm not sure whether you support that or not. In previous testimony, you talked about the Nanisivik Naval Facility as being an important post that needed to be completed and developed and whatnot.

I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about that Nanisivik development, where it's at, and the importance it plays in terms of northern defence and security.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Having a port is crucial, because there's no naval infrastructure in the Arctic. We badly need it. If you want to be more present in the north, this is crucial. So we should support it and make sure that this project will take place. Eventually we should think about the development of the north over 20 or 50 years, by having other ports. If there are any benefits from opening the Northwest Passage, we must be able to take advantage of them. Having some ports, even small ports, could be crucial to that. So the Nanisivik facility, as the first one, is essential.

● (1205)

Mr. John Carmichael: So when you talk about Nanisivik—and I refer to the comment of my colleague Mr. Leung on the northern Pacific—would you support a similar type of presence in that geographic region as well?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Now I'm getting outside of my area of expertise. I would probably just be thinking out loud rather than giving you a strong analysis, so I would prefer not to comment on this.

Mr. John Carmichael: Good. Thank you very much.

The Chair: You have a minute.

Mr. John Carmichael: When you talk about the U.S. being absent in the Arctic, I wonder how reasonable it is to expect the U.S. to become more engaged, particularly with its budgetary restrictions. Looking at the significant budget cuts we've witnessed in the U.S. directly, what's the likelihood? We talk about having an agreement. We can have a good discussion, and I think we can all agree, because we're very close as friends, but what's the likelihood of this ever happening?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Actually, that is interesting because I was looking at what my colleagues wrote on this over the last 10 years, and they all kept saying that the Americans were coming and that they would sign the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We're still waiting.

So I don't want to commit myself by telling you they're going to be there next year or the year after. I prefer to be very careful by saying, let's take the current situation as the one that will stay for the predictable future. Then Canada's strategy in that context is to engage the Americans or to take leadership on this, rather than experimenting—

The Chair: We'll have to cut you off there.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

The Americans will tell us—and their representatives have told me—that they don't believe in the militarization of the Arctic. We've been told that there's no military threat in the Arctic, not only by you but by the deputy minister of defence also, or the assistant minister of defence for policy.

Yet, you're complaining that we have a reputation for being militaristic in the Arctic. Is it possible to separate out the need for infrastructure, which we just talked about? Also, Mr. Carmichael talked about the need for icebreakers, the need for capability or presence, and a stance or posture, if you will. Is it possible to separate out those two and say the one is important and that we should pursue that, but that the other may lead to unintended consequences?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Actually, it's not because we're building icebreakers or ports that makes Canada to be labelled as aggressive. It's the tone of the discourse. It's the American diplomats who keep asking me, "What's your problem, you Canadians? Why are you paying so much attention to your sovereignty? No one wants your sovereignty."

So it's the discourse much more than the material commitment that is important here. It's the way you present or label it that is important. The only ones who are talking about Canadian sovereignty in the north are the Canadians themselves. So we are creating the issue ourselves. We're bringing the attention of other people around the Arctic to Canadians' concerns regarding their sovereignty, just by our own attitude.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

You talked about the agreement with NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and the Canadian Joint Operations. Looking at it here now, December 11, 2012, it was signed by two generals. Is this a diplomatic agreement or is it an operational framework? I'm being the cautious Canadian here now, not the cautious continentalist. This was not widely publicized, obviously. It's done by the joint board, which has been in existence since 1944, I think. Is this something that we should know more about, that should be part of a larger strategy that should be spelled out, as you said?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: This is very common. I think there are something like 700 or 800 agreements of that kind between Canada and the U.S. just on the military side, as far as we know. So it's not a concern.

My concern actually is that it's not at a high enough level. It's only at the tactical and operational level, which I think is not enough. We should move higher than that. So my concern is the opposite.

● (1210)

Mr. Jack Harris: The other area that we talked about, maritime domain awareness, of course is important, and I think we're sharing that now through NORAD. The next step, if there would be one, potentially, is, as we now have in NORAD, a joint command. Is that something you would want to see or that we need—

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Sorry, excuse me. What's the—

Mr. Jack Harris: Within NORAD there is a Canadian officer as the second in command and an American officer in command. We're being told it's for a reason, that there was a Canadian general in charge of the NORAD at the time of 9/11 who closed the air space over North America. Are you anticipating that's the kind of thing we might get into with the U.S. with respect to the maritime domain in its entirety?

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: If it's still the same structure, I doubt it will change. The Americans certainly don't want to change the idea of the commander in chief remaining an American. They won't change anything on that, for sure.

To have a Canadian as the second in command is a pretty good concession for Canada.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm actually looking forward rather than objecting to the situation as it exists. What I'm talking about is the notion that on the maritime side, we might move from the domain awareness cooperation, which is what have now to a large extent, with whatever sensors and capabilities Canada and the U.S. have now being shared to identify what's out there on the ocean and potentially heading our way, including ships and potentially narcotics, etc. That's all there. But are we anticipating moving from the surveillance and awareness side to some other side? No.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: I really don't hear anything about that. This is one of the criticisms that I heard about the maritime NORAD stuff, that it is used only for surveillance, with very few operational capabilities. But as far as I know, there is no discussion about changing that situation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bezan, for the last five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Professor Roussel, I appreciate your passion for the defence of Canada's Arctic and cooperation with our American allies.

I'm struggling with your comment that we don't have access, that whenever we go down to Washington, the doors aren't open for us. Yet every time we travel as a committee, as parliamentarians, when we're reaching out and talking to our American colleagues, they're telling us that the doors are open to us because of our commitment to the war on terror in Afghanistan.

I thought that we had built up quite a bit of goodwill and cooperation between our two governments because of our doing the right thing. On May 9 we're honouring everyone who fought and those who fell in Afghanistan. So I'm somewhat confused by what you said, that the Americans don't seem to care, because we keep getting told that the doors are open for us. We definitely have their attention and their appreciation for our military efforts.

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: In general, yes, Canadians have a very good reputation in Washington. But it's in general.

The problem is when you try to use it in terms of strategy for something very specific. Then you must be sure that someone in Washington will pay attention to what you're doing, and people in Washington must be aware of what you're looking for. If you want to use it on a tactical level, in negotiations for example—I'm using a very big example here with the pipeline negotiations—if you want some concessions from the U.S., if you say, “Let's be nice to the Americans and they will give us what we want”, it won't work for various reasons, even if we have a very good reputation. Yes, having a good reputation makes people say, “Okay, yes, it's nice to meet you. It's nice to talk to you.” But it doesn't necessarily mean they will give you exactly what you want in terms of concessions on the military side or elsewhere.

Another thing is that Canadians don't usually realize that you cannot expect to have a good reputation on the military side and expect a concession on the trade side. There's a compartmentalization between issue areas. We should not cross these lines, because in the long run Canadians will lose, for sure. So we have to keep that—

Mr. James Bezan: We see that now with Keystone and everything else, such as country of origin labelling.

The one thing I want to touch on is the whole threat assessment related to North American security. We heard when we met with officials from NORAD that our airspace is tested by Russian military aircraft all the time—on a consistent basis, and not just from an Arctic perspective, but on the Pacific coast, along the Atlantic coastline, and in both American and Canadian airspace. That, I think, is somewhat of concern to the committee and should be to all Canadians: the Russians have always been at the forefront of seeing how engaged we are and whether or not we are asleep at the switch.

We have a proliferation of cruise missiles now around the world; just about all the major players have them. While most countries with leading economies have shown fiscal restraint on military spending, the Russians have increased spending by 92%. They have in recent times re-opened two Arctic naval bases that were left over from the Cold War, and they have definitely increased financing to build more vessels for the Arctic.

I wonder whether this should be sending some warning signals to us that Russia has a more aggressive stance in relation to the Arctic and to overall North American security.

● (1215)

Dr. Stéphane Roussel: Yes, we can put it like that. If you want to be careful regarding the future, you will recognize that Russians have developed some capabilities. But capabilities don't necessarily mean that they have the will to be aggressive. The Arctic is important for Russians for more than economic or geostrategic reasons; it is important in terms of identity. It's important for the Russians to show that they are still a great power, and one of their main foregrounds is the Arctic. Even for domestic reasons they have to show some muscle there. It's part of the game.

My point is that we shouldn't overreact to this. Yes, we must be careful. We have to check them and keep an eye on them, but do not overreact to this situation.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony today.

The committee will be going in camera for committee business, but before we do so, the chair would like to bring up a couple of items.

Mr. Carmichael, with unanimous consent you may remain during the in camera meeting. With the consent of the committee, Mr. Harris's son would like to sit in, and that will require unanimous consent.

The chair is at your disposition. Do we have consent for both gentlemen to remain?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That being the case, we will adjourn and reconvene in two minutes in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]